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April 1904

## THE COURSE OF STUDY, HOW IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD AND UTILIZED.

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, DR. A. H. MACKEY.

It may be logically maintained that it is the parents of our school children who should formulate the course of study ; for it is their children who have to be educated, and it is they themselves who have to pay the cost of it.

But the great majority of parents are so involved in their necessary avocations, and feel that they have so few opportunities to study the drift of tendencies in the great complex world that they elect from their number, the best qualified to manage their schools ; so that we have thus the first order of select men to deal with education,—the school trustees or school board.

But in like manner the members of the school boards feel that they are not in the best position for the full understanding of the responsibilities and duties of an educational system ; and in turn they seek for some one who can give his whole time to the study of these problems,—a specialist. They find him in the teaching profession, and appoint him their teacher and educational adviser. The teacher then, belongs to the second order of selectmen. They are the educational experts selected by the school boards, who were themselves selected by the parents and ratepayers.

### HISTORY OF COMMON SCHOOL COURSE.

This explains why the Council of Public Instruction, through the education Department in 1880, asked the Provincial Educational Association, then composed exclusively of the teachers of the Province, to agree upon a course of study which would give schools in every part of the Province, the advantage of the courses in the best schools. This was twenty-five years ago.

A course of study covering the common and high school grades was presented at this convention and was fully discussed. The draft of the course for the common school grades was referred to a special committee to report at the following convention. In 1881, the revised course was again fully discussed, and eventually passed in the form in which it was immediately prescribed by the Council of Public Instruction. It covered the first eight years of school life, and can be found in practically its original form in the manual of the Educational Statutes and Regulations, published in 1888. It contained "Lessons on Nature" specifying particularly a number of objects or species, instead of leaving the selection of the objects to each teacher as at present. Latin was recommended as an optional in grade VIII, in which grade

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were also used the present High School Geography of Grades IX and X, and the present British History text of Grade X. The name of Geometry with the drill on its definitions have also since disappeared from this grade, mechanical drawing practically taking its place. In general respects the course is substantially the same as that of 1881 with such simplifications as indicated above; except for the addition of the "Health Readers" which was due neither to the Association nor to the Council of Public Instruction, but to the direct legislation of the Provincial Legislature.

In 1893 condensed or simplified courses were outlined for common school courses, with only four, three, two, or one teacher, and were published annually since, in the Journal of Education.

For many years, the uncontracted common school course for fully graded schools used to be printed in the school register. But, from certain incidents, it was feared that some untrained teachers were trying in an absurd fashion to adapt the work of a rural school to this course, altogether oblivious of the contracted course outlined for it. Hence the publication in the Register, now, of only the general prescriptions of the course of study, leaving the special prescriptions for schools of all classes in the Journal.

#### MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF THE COMMON SCHOOL COURSE.

I have already alluded to the attempt of untrained teachers to apply the course of study outlined for a common school with eight teachers to a rural school with one teacher. That so extreme a mistake was often made by any one is not well attested, but there is concurrent evidence that there may have been many who were not aware of the simplified courses.

Some people reading criticisms originating from systems like that prevailing in England from 1870 to 1895, thought it would be safe to expect to find over-pressure as the result of our common school course, which they might have assumed to be copied from such systems. But there was never a shadow of foundation for such a charge against our course; for whatever over-pressure there may be, is the result entirely, of local conditions and management. The old English system paid the public funds to each school board according to the number of pupils passing in each subject at the annual inspection of the Inspector. In order to win large grants therefore, the teachers, to please their trustees had not only to make a strenuous effort to pass as many pupils as possible in the ordinary subjects at each inspection, but to take as many subjects as possible. For the remuneration was not dependent on a general pass, but on the particular pass on each subject—so many pence for each particular subject.

With us, the function of the Inspector is to examine the state of the school to see if both teacher and school board is doing all that should be done under the circumstances, and to point out respects in which improvement can be made. He examines, values, marks and reports to the Superintendent a great many things; but they are all

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relating to the teachers' work and the state of the school. Not a single note need be made on an individual pupil. Not a single pupil might be able to pass on all or any subjects, and yet both teacher and trustees would draw the full amount of public money, provided the general defects are remedied as directed. A pupil may remain for years, or forever, in the same grade, and the school board will draw just as much of the Municipal fund, and the teacher, as much Provincial Aid. There is, therefore, a total lack of pressure from the central administration in our system ; so that criticism so far as the first eight years of the course is concerned, charging the general system with responsibility for over-pressure is absurd and as baseless as a dream. It is foolish also ; for the criticism if directed against the parties who are responsible for over-working pupils may have a useful effect. And it is the proper function of the press to expose, and endeavor to create a sentiment to correct what may be wrong in the public, self-governing corporations called school sections.

On the other hand, there are many able educationists who think that our system is not sufficiently under the control of the central administration ; and that if a little more of the principle of payment according to results could be carefully introduced it would correct lack of effort in many schools. The present plan is the simplest however ; and between the Inspector, the press, and interested parties on school boards or in the community, lagging sections can be spurred to a degree of activity even too tense, as has often been demonstrated. Over-pressure however, is a danger peculiar only to the most live schools ; where pupils who on account of either ill-health, slow powers of learning, defective preparation in previous grades, or peculiar engrossing conditions at home, cannot follow the progress of the average class which is likely to be enthusiastically vigorous.

The course of study does not require any one who is not able to do the work of a grade in one year, to attempt to do it. The pressure comes from unwise parents, the desire of children to follow their fellows or the ambition of the teachers to make as many passes as possible. The course merely fixes the order of succession of studies, and their simultaneity, and permits of the classification of pupils when passing from one school or grade to another, with as little waste as possible. Without such a general system one teacher might develop reading, or ciphering, or some other subject in one school or grade, so that when the pupil passed into another, he might be too advanced for the class in some subjects and not sufficiently advanced in others. The system therefore is absolutely necessary to co-ordinate the work in all schools.

The real difficulty is seen however here. One child can go through two grades in one year, as we all know. The majority can go through in one year ; and they are very convenient pupils. There are some who require two years, but they are not inconvenient. The inconvenient ones are those who require a fractional part of the year to complete the average course. One can do it easily in three-fourths of a year, another in the half of a year, or a year and a half. How can we suit these ? It must be acknowledged that the system suits the majority ;



and we have only the few to make special provision for. These cases are so varied that they can be dealt with satisfactorily only by an intelligent teacher who has made a full acquaintance with the peculiarities of each. In towns and cities, the supervisor, principal, or school board can be consulted by the teacher; and for some cases special arrangements can be made to simplify the work. For instance, in a large town or city, we may expect a sufficient number of pupils slower than the average, to justify a special teacher for them, in a class-room where the progress may be so slow as to suit their temperaments or condition. Such a room might have several grades under one teacher, if the town is small. Or as specified on the last page of the school register for rural schools, such pupils might be graded on the fewer and more essential subjects, provided it is reasonably probable the omission is not likely to handicap them in their future career.

The system of promotions in the common school grades is absolutely under the charge of the school board as advised by the principal or supervisor of the schools. Various methods are followed in different towns; and in some places it is found advantageous to change the method from time to time. The simplest is, however, the adoption of the estimate of the teacher, when the school board is absolutely certain of the ability and honesty of the teacher for such a duty. But this rule can never be followed safely without perpetual watchfulness, and due guards; not only on account of the possibility of error, but of the probability of baseless suspicion.

These remarks will enable all, it is hoped, to read regulations 152 and 153 defining the character and objects of the course of study, so as to understand how easily it accommodates itself to any local arrangement which can be made to suit peculiar cases which may appear in any school. Their republication from year to year in the JOURNAL OF EDUCATION indicates the importance attached to their full understanding.

#### PUBLIC SCHOOL COURSE OF STUDY.

152. The public school course of study may be considered under its subdivisions of the common and high school courses. They furnish a basis for the classification of pupils by the teachers and for the examination of schools by the inspectors, while they also secure a definite co-ordination of all the work attempted in the public schools of all grades, thus fostering the harmonious interaction of all the educational forces of the province.

These courses are to be followed in all schools, particularly with reference to (1) the order of succession of the subjects, and (2) the simultaneity of their study. The fulness of detail with which they can be carried out in each school must depend upon local conditions, such as the size of the school, the number of grades assigned to the teacher, etc. As suggestive to teachers with little experience, contracted forms of the detailed common school course for miscellaneous and partially graded schools are appended.

The public school course of study is the result of the observation and experience of representative leading teachers of the province, under the suggestion of the experiments of other countries and the criticism of our teachers in provincial conventions assembled for many years in succession. A system developed in

such a manner must necessarily in some points be a compromise, and presumably therefore at least a little behind what we might expect from the few most advanced teachers. But it is also very likely to be a better guide than the practice of a majority, without any mutual consultation for improvement. The successive progression of studies is intended to be adapted to the order of development of the powers of the child's mind, while their simultaneous progression is designed to prevent monotony and one-sidedness, and to produce a harmonious and healthy development of the physical, mental and moral powers of the pupil. The apparent multiplicity of the subjects is due to their subdivision for the purpose of emphasizing leading features of the main subjects which otherwise might be overlooked by inexperienced teachers. The courses have been demonstrated to be adapted to the average pupil under a teacher of average skill. The teacher is, however, cautioned to take special care that pupils (more especially any prematurely promoted or in feeble health) should not run any risk of "over-pressure" in attempting to follow the average class-work.

Changes in these courses of study must always be expected from year to year, but to a very small extent it is hoped, except in the prescription of certain texts in the high school course. These will be published from time to time in the bulletin of the Department, the JOURNAL OF EDUCATION published in April and October of each year.

#### GENERAL PRESCRIPTIONS.

153. The general regulations on account of their paramount importance and their unchangeable character, are printed on page 10 of the School Register, so that they may be always before the eyes of the teacher. To save space they are not republished here; but attention is called to the fact that they are even of more importance than the special prescriptions which follow below as supplementary.

[The *Special Prescriptions* for common school grades are as in the *Journal*, from year to year.]

#### OUR COMMON SCHOOL COURSE IS MERELY AN OUTLINE DIRECTION.

To keep our schools in general line, and obviate the disorder, dislocation, unmanageableness and waste which would prevail without such an arrangement. Its outline character allows schools to develop a very considerable individuality without being thrown out of articulation with the other schools. Unlike the more detailed courses which prevail in many countries, teachers can expand it into fuller work where the class of pupils admits of it, or to contract its detail to suit the capacities of pupils low in the intellectual scale. It freely allows School Boards to introduce additional, new or practical work wherever the conditions seem to make such an experiment desirable; for the formal consent of the Education Department is all that is necessary. Manual training work of any kind, domestic or household arts, commercial subjects such as shorthand and the like, are not only allowed, but recommended to school boards. They are not made obligatory, however, as some of these subjects are in some countries at the present day; for until the school section which is a free and independent corporation of the people, within the lines prescribed by the Provincial Law, is ready to appreciate the value of such extra subject, it may be as well not to force it on

them. For the successful introduction of any such subject is materially aided by the sympathy in its favor.

#### IS OUR COURSE TOO FULL ALREADY ?

It is not. Our own experience has demonstrated this, as well as the experience of the schools of the leading educated nations, whose courses are, as a rule, both fuller and more detailed. As an example I present herewith a copy of the latest course of study for common school grades for the province of Victoria, Australia. Before this course, which was issued only two months ago, was prepared, a commission was appointed to visit the leading educational countries of the world. Nova Scotia was not visited by the Commission ; but they sought a full exhibit of our laws, regulations, forms and statistics with which they were supplied. The provisional course was examined by a Provincial Commission which called a great many educational experts before it. The result is, a course much fuller and more detailed than ours, involving an annual examination by the Inspector and the passing of the pupils of all schools which have not established a reputation to exempt them from the repetition of the examination. The number of marks to be given for each subject is even specified. As an example, I quote the subjects and marks of one of the intermediate grades, Class III : Reading 15, Recitation 2, Comprehension 2, Writing 8, Grammar 6, Composition 5, Spelling and Transcription 8, Arithmetic written 15, Arithmetic mental 5, Arithmetic oral 2, History 3, Geography 6, Science and Nature Study 6, Drawing 6, Needle Work and Manual Training 6, Singing 3, Drill and Physical Exercise 2. Total marks, 100. From an examination of this course it must be admitted that ours is simplicity itself in comparison ; and that although it may not be full enough as a guide to the untrained teacher, it allows the trained teacher to do as good work as may be done under the most detailed modern course.

The teacher is the main factor of the problem. But before we venture to enforce the more complete training of all our teachers we must make it possible to retain them in the service. This can be done only by consolidating small and weak school sections so as to make them stronger financially while reducing their number, as I endeavored to explain in my address to the Association last year. With trained teachers there will be no difficulty due to the misunderstanding of the general course of study.

#### THE THREE R'S.

The absurd notion sometimes exploited, that by confining pupils to the three R's alone during the common school course, they would be made more expert in these subjects, is disproved by the statistics (collected from the teachers themselves for a few years) estimating the time spent in the class room in the teaching of the various subjects. For the collection and publication of these statistics our Province received a compliment from the Harvard school of Pedagogy ; for they happen to be the only statistics of the time actually spent in the school room in the teaching of the various subjects, which have yet been extensively and systematically collected and published.

Here is the actual proportion of time in minutes taken up in teaching each subject per day on the average (year ended July 1901)—although in practice all subjects are not taken up each day, and often not during the same portion of the year :

	Minutes.	Minutes.	
English { Spelling . . . . .	35	121	Three R's 215
Reading . . . . .	62		
Composition and Grammar . . . . .	24		
Writing { Writing . . . . .	19	30	Other subjects 70
Drawing . . . . .	13		
Bookkeeping . . . . .	7		
Arithmetic . . . . .		55	
History and Geography . . . . .		30	
Oral Lessons { Temperance . . . . .	0	21	
Morals . . . . .	5		
Nature . . . . .	7		
Exercises { Drill . . . . .	4	10	
Music . . . . .	6		
Total . . . . .		285	

About one-third of the schools are attempting to do a little or more high school work. This would bring the average time of the teachers' work considerably over 285 minutes per day—perhaps over 300 minutes or 5 hours

It will be seen then that the 3 R's have 215 minutes out of 285 devoted to them. It is very evident from these statistics, that however defective many teachers may be in their methods, and however absurd some of them may be in their conceptions, they have on the whole a very good idea of the proportion of time to spend on each subject.

How much improvement would be made by not adding the 70 minutes per day to the 215 minutes of tiresome drill previously endured? I would do little beyond reducing the attendance at school to a lower level, while it would leave those in attendance without the main influence of the good school in stimulating pupils to understand the world and know how best to do their duty in it. It would be practically the training of the children for the narrow slavery dens of the perpetual clerk of some business dictator, instead of opening to them the doors to all the privileges and prizes of enlightened citizenship.

#### REVISION OF THE COURSE OF STUDY.

The power of revising the Course of study lies with the Council of Public Instruction. But as the school board is assumed to consult with the Supervisor or principal teacher of its schools, so the Council consults with its secretary. Its general plan is to make no change unless it can be proven to be an improvement having the concurrence of leading educationists. As the Superintendent may not be any more all round than any other man, the Council attaches great importance to the



consensus of such bodies of educationists in conference as our institutes and especially our Provincial conventions. It is for this reason that when the Provincial Educational Association is in annual session, I endeavor to obtain its views; and when it is not in session I send a circular to the Principals of the leading Academies and High schools, Inspectors and other educationists for suggestions which it becomes my duty to balance against each other, recommending none of the changes suggested unless they are generally supported. The variety, and often the incompatibility of these suggestions would be an eye-opener to him who looks out upon the educational world from merely his own local point of view. The individual who is least acquainted with the history of our own educational development, and who knows nothing accurately of the progress in other countries, is often the most enthusiastically certain that his proposition will put the point under consideration "all right." He often never suspects the number of points which his supposed improvement would at the same time put "all wrong."

One man recommends that the species of plants, minerals etc., to be covered in the Nature study course, should be specified the same for every school in the Province.

Another rightly thinks there should be no such specification, so as to allow teachers to select those which they can make most interesting, or those which each locality specially provides.

Another says "Allow the principal and staff of each school to make a definite course for their own schools, depending on the natural objects of interest in the section and the tastes or training of the members of the staff." And such a course is the one the general curriculum suggests to be provided in each school section in the Province.

Still another says "Let us not only have an exactly definite detailed course for each school in the Province, but let all books be done away with. Let the Education Office issue a bulletin every week, containing the lessons for every grade in every subject, reading and spelling, geography and history, arithmetic and drawing, Latin and Greek, for the following week. The schools would then set themselves to master thoroughly this weekly dole. It would save the teacher the energy-wasting effort of deciding just how much his school should accomplish in a week." The teachers supporting this view were notably able and evidently felt quite sure they could enable the majority of their pupils to master each week's prescription, often before the week's end. But the Education Department hardly felt equal to the task of keeping such vigorous workers at regular high class uninterrupted employment, especially during a snow blockade. But there were reasons assigned for every proposal. There were some other "reasons against," which were evidently not thought of. But these of course, were supposed to be looked into by the Education Department. The reason why the discussion of these points is specially valuable in conference, is the mutual instruction obtained from the interchange of different ideas. When all these various ideas are sent in to a central receiving officer, and the general concurrences noted and acted upon, the difficulty is

that every suggestion not acted upon is apt to be thought as being rejected because the Superintendent is not a sufficiently all-round informed man to appreciate the suggestion. But were the full suite of suggestions seen by each contributor, the probable conclusion might be inferable by each without discussion. I hope that these remarks will encourage members of the convention to throw their ideas into the crucible of our conference, from out of which there will likely emerge to the satisfaction of all the sum total of the sterling metal in each.

#### HIGH SCHOOL COURSE OF STUDY.

No one should discuss the Nova Scotian courses of study, without specifying whether he means the common school course of the first eight years of school life, or the high school course of the next three years,—the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. The twelfth grade which is at the least a two years course should be undertaken by the largest academic institutions only ; and perhaps, might be left with advantage to our numerous small universities. It need not therefore be considered here.

In connection with our high school course we have a provincial examination, which although not rendered compulsory upon any school by the Education Department, is often made compulsory by local school boards, and by the recognized value of the certificates within the Province, and without it. This peculiarity puts these three years in a different category from the previous eight. What applies to one may be absolutely meaningless if assumed to be applied to the other. This is a simple touchstone to settle at once, whether the critic knows anything at all definite about what he attempts to discuss. In fact, when the complaint is made that there are too many subjects in the curriculum of the common schools, the complaint may be referring to the simple rural school which is attempting to overtake some of the high school work. This is,

#### ANOTHER POPULAR MISUNDERSTANDING.

In many countries rural schools are not allowed to go beyond the subjects prescribed for the common school grades. It is argued that if such instruction is attempted, it takes away the teacher's attention from the majority of the pupils which belongs to the common school grades, in order to bestow it on a few of those doing high school work ; and that the high school work done under such circumstances is likely to be inaccurate and defective. These advanced children, it is maintained, should be sent to the academies or other high schools where they can be taught in large classes and by special teachers. In Nova Scotia on the other hand, there is no limit to the high school subjects which may be introduced into the rural school, except the judgment of the school board and the teacher, reinforced by the advice of the Inspector. As a consequence there is some high school work done in one third of our public schools. Sometimes the teacher objects to do high school work in such a school and is thus in opposition to the desire of the school board. Then the Inspector has to be called in to decide. Occasion-

ally the teacher desires to do some high school work, perhaps for the gratification of a kind and influential parent whose child would otherwise have to be sent at some expense to a high school away from home, while the school board objects. But in the majority of cases, teacher and school board agree to allow some advanced work to be done for a few of the more advanced scholars. This is considered in the majority of sections to be a great privilege enjoyed from the earliest history of education in the section; and its repeal would be looked upon as an unfair discrimination against the rural schools, and in favor of the towns in which the high schools are generally located. We are to this extent open to the charge of allowing too many subjects to be taught in rural schools. But the majority of rural schools insist upon it, and would strongly oppose any change. And besides, as it is managed in many sections, substantial aid is being given advanced pupils who could not afford to go from home to a high school, without seriously affecting the common school work. Such a favorable condition of affairs, however, can exist only under the charge of a teacher who has an unusual genius for the management of a school. At some of our institutes, the "mixed common and high" rural school has been discussed, but with no general definite consensus of opinion. Hence it is deemed better to allow the balancing of the advantages and disadvantages of this system in any locality to the judgment of the school board and the teacher, with the Inspector as umpire, should there be disagreement. The question however, is open like many cognate ones, for further consideration.

#### HISTORY OF THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE OF STUDY.

When the Free School Act was passed in 1864 the syllabus prescribed for teachers of the various classes began to become the course of study in the secondary schools. There was a special demand for teachers, and the high schools had to prepare them.

In 1867 the examination of teachers and the granting of Licenses were transferred from the original District school boards to the Education Department and a Provincial Board of Examiners. Many good rural schools competed with the town high schools and academies in the preparing of candidates for this provincial examination, and the fame of the schools rose and fell with the fluctuation in the number of teachers' licenses won. So thoroughly did this idea take possession of the public, that even to the present day, although the system passed away twelve years ago, writers in the public press speak of the number of "Licenses" won by the schools whose exploits they herald.

The number going up for the teachers' examination increased from 1867 until it reached a maximum in 1877 when there were 2058 examined. Only 554 passed. Nothing daunted, 2003 presented themselves next year when only 101 passed. They prepared themselves not only on the scholarship subjects but on the subjects of Teaching, School Law and School Management. This went on—but checked by a fee and age limit—until the year 1892, when out of 1432 candidates 175 were successful.

In the meantime the conviction was growing since 1880, that the old syllabus for the teaching profession was not the ideal course of study for the secondary schools. But the formation of a course acceptable to the Educational Association was not so easy a task as the course for the common schools. From 1880 to 1884, it was from year to year dealt with by special committees, and was finally completed and prescribed in 1885.

#### DOUBLE COURSE FOR HIGH SCHOOLS, 1885-1893.

From this date, then, there was a double course for high schools—The *one* prescribed by the Council for high schools, and the *syllabus* prescribed by the Council for Teachers' Licenses. The academies had to follow the former to obtain their share of the academic grant; and to include the latter to draw the really earnest students intending to be teachers, whose success made the reputation of the schools. The non-academic high schools untrammelled by any expectation of an academic grant adapted their courses specially to the different grades of Teachers' Licenses, and gained an advantage over the academies.

#### SINGLE COURSE FOR HIGH SCHOOLS.

In 1893 it was concluded that the teacher should have at least the scholarship of the general high school graduates, and that there would be a simplification in making the scholarship subjects of the teachers' course the same as that of the high schools. The teachers' professional examination was then separated from the high school group. The age limit and fee for those passing in regular course were abolished with the result of again having a large number of candidates for the high school examination and only a small number for the professional examination for teachers—about one in six. The statistics of this evolution from 1887 to 1904 are shown in the table below:

YEAR	NO. EXAMINED.	NO. PASSED.	NO. EXAMINED ON PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS EACH YEAR.
1877.....	2058	554	2058
1878.....	2003	101	2003
1879.....	1026	210	1026
1880.....	802	210	802
1881.....	742	322	742
1882.....	834	355	834
1883.....	1027	422	1027
1884.....	1224	530	1224
1885.....	1485	614	1224
1886.....	1548	540	1485
1887.....	1424	433	1548
1888.....	1291	408	1424
1889.....	1287	382	1291
1890.....	1244	452	1287
1891.....	1334	379	1244
1892.....	1432	175	1334
			1432

FOR LICENSES.

On scholarship and professional subjects combined.

FOR LICENSES.

On professional and scholarship subjects.



YEAR	NO. EXAMINED.	NO. PASSED.	NO. EXAMINED ON PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS EACH YEAR.	
			FOR M. P. Q. CERTIFICATES.	On professional subjects alone.
1893	1500	508	370	
1894	1922	700	334	
1895	2300	684	300	
1896	2517	1313	455	
1897	2917	957	550	
1898	3304	1220	663	
1899	3377	1571	683	
1900	3450	1898	588	
1901	3470	1529	544	
1902	3335	1370	408	
1903	3258	1742	474	
1904	3437	1662	557	

FOR HIGH SCHOOL  
CERTIFICATES.

On scholarship subjects only.

FOR M. P. Q.  
CERTIFICATES.

On professional subjects  
alone.

### PECULIARITY OF THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE.

The peculiarity of this three year course as compared with the common school course of eight years, is in the fact that certificates are granted to candidates who choose to take the examination and are successful in passing. But even in these grades the examinations are purely optional so far as the central educational administration is concerned; nor is there any money grant depending on the number of successful candidates. Yet the effect of public opinion is such that teachers exert themselves to show as many successful candidates as possible; and candidates are spurred to effort by picturing the woful plight of the lazy student who will stand before the school and the Province, as having failed. In some cases the teacher is thus apt to suffer on account of conditions affecting the standing of the school which is beyond his control, and candidates of nervous mold are tortured by fear of failure which the teacher painted as vividly as possible to stimulate the phlegmatic or careless. These evils are of local origin however, and should be guarded against by a discriminating local administration. Teachers should be careful to see that no candidate is attempting to do more work than can properly be done, and that the stimulating advice given for the benefit of the hale and hearty, though lazy members of the class, should not be taken personally by the highly strung nervous pupil who is only too much disposed to do too much without such a stimulus. There have been foolish things said when such a case occurs—for instance when it is suggested that because some pupil is worried therefore all examinations are wrong. For thousands believe them to be one of the most healthful intellectual stimuli, and find them convenient and even necessary for numerous purposes. It is the parent or the local authorities and they alone who fail in duty when there is any case of over pressure. This is strikingly illustrated by the youthful age at which many candidates pass their examinations—of which friends and teachers sometimes boast. But the central administration does not even offer the temptation of a single cent of public money for the promotion of pupils from one grade to another. And even if it did, the responsibility of such errors would still be on the local parties. All the central administration can do in such a case, is when notified to investigate; and then withhold public

funds from the school board allowing such errors of management to continue.

As all healthy boys delight to test their powers by competitive and playful exercises, so intellectually healthy students and schools enjoy the comparison of what they can do with what the rest of the world can do. This is the spirit in which all candidates should proceed to examination. The teacher who sends them up in fear and trembling like culprits to an inexorable judge, fails to rise to the full height of his profession; for they should be inspired with a philosophical or sportsmanlike spirit to do their best, and take without hysterical terror the award as just exactly what they deserved. The hysterical terror is often the product of misguided home influence, the first signs of which the thoughtful teacher should be on the lookout for, so as to prevent its development. This I am glad to notice has been most satisfactorily accomplished in very many of our best and largest institutions. But we may always expect exceptional cases to arise.

#### NEED OF REVISION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE.

With reference to our optional system of subjects, we have at least the compliment of the imitation of Ontario. We cannot however, devise a course of study which will enable the single teacher of a small high school to do as much work as the numerous staff of a large institution. All we can do is to point out the peculiar advantage which the successful student in the small institution has, since when he is successful it is because his teacher has inspired him to do the work himself which the teachers of the larger institution would help him in doing. Such inspiration develops a self reliance which becomes the student's permanent possession, and follows him generally into the university and the vocations of life where initiative is everything, and no teacher is at hand to help as in the school room. This probably accounts for the proportionally large number of students attaining eminence from the smaller high schools.

The course is substantially the same as it has been for many years, however; while our conditions have been changing. It is most desirable not to alter the old standard, for that would affect the value of certificates and the standards of all institutions accepting them. It is also necessary that the standards be as far as practicable, on the same level as those of other countries with which we are in touch. When we come to make any substantial change, it must be with extensive knowledge and with intelligent circumspection. Demands are being made for more attention to drawing and commercial subjects. These can be introduced into the high school course as options, in the same manner as indicated in the common school course. Halifax has already organized a commercial course, but it is not therefore advisable for us to press the adoption of such a course on other institutions. Better allow these developments to arise as the circumstances of each community demand. As soon as a want is felt, people are more likely to welcome a helping hand. Before it is felt, the helping hand may be spurned as an impertinence. There is no cast iron law preventing the

evolution of any useful feature new or old, even if it is not formulated on our course.

But the time is coming when we should formulate optional courses to advertise the possibilities to local authorities. Some suggestions were made in previous addresses to this Association for the expression of the opinion of members, and some have been tentatively put forth as being under consideration, in the Journal. As the expression of opinion has been very meagre, the principle of abiding by the old until the new is demonstrated to be desirable, is followed by the Council.

As it will be necessary very shortly to prepare a new Manual of School law, it is desirable that any changes to be made for a few years to come should be determined in the near future. To enable you to prepare yourselves to aid in this work I have outlined the history of the evolution of the present course, so that you may the more easily obtain detailed information respecting its origin and character. I have called attention to the principle difficulties with which we have to deal and some of the problems which we must try to solve in the most satisfactory manner possible. As this Association is the original organizer of our course of study, it is peculiarly its duty to aid in its further development. And for this purpose we should desire in this conference, and in the opinions of members sent in afterwards to the Education Department, any thoughts suggested by one's environment and experience, even should the speaker or writer have no opportunity to observe the effect of similar experiments in other countries. Those who have a wider range of knowledge can supplement such experience and opinions; and I am here to answer such questions as I can, to aid any student of these problems in our common work. But after all, the course of study is simply our ritual. It is to the teacher we must look for the living force to create the useful scholarship and character desired.

